

Last night I voted in favor of the Senate's bipartisan bill to expand health insurance for lower-income kids -- called the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). This program was started ten years ago and helped many kids in Illinois obtain health care insurance. Because this program was set to expire, it was time for Congress to take a new look.

The bill we passed today also passed the Senate 68-31. It increases fees on cigarettes and cigars in return for expanding the eligibility for health insurance for lower income children. It was a good compromise that the President should sign into law. Bottom line under this bill -- less smoking and more insurance for kids.

The House originally considered a bad bill that cut over \$190 billion from health care for seniors under Medicare. It cut kidney care, oxygen and limited access to wheel chairs for seniors. Speaker Pelosi should have never set health care for seniors against health care for kids. I voted against this bill and congressional leaders eventually gave up on it.

The bill that passed the House and Senate last night leaves health care for seniors alone. We are on the way to expanding children's health care -- but not at the expense of seniors who depend on Medicare.